

B. F. Hastings Bank Building
2nd & "J" St.
Sacramento, Sacramento Co.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH DATA BOOK REPORT
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B. F. HASTINGS BANK BUILDING

Sacramento, Sacramento County, California

ADDRESS: 128-132 J Street

OWNER: Hyman Brodorsky

OCCUPANT: Various Tenants

USE: Stores and Rooming House

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The B. F. Hastings Bank Building,¹ erected in 1853, was a part of the historic business center of Sacramento after the fire of November 2, 1852. It replaced the W. Merritt Building, a two-story brick structure, which was destroyed by the fire.² This historic site was not only a banking house, but was the location of the State Supreme Court and the offices of the State Attorney General and the State Librarian. It also contained the offices of Wells, Fargo & Co., the Alta California Telegraph Co. and the Pony Express.

PHYSICAL HISTORY:

The B. F. Hastings Building is a two story brick structure erected in 1852-1853, and stands on the southwest corner of J and Second Streets. This building, which is now considered as one building, was originally constructed as two buildings, each twenty feet wide, a common practice in the 1850's. The B. F. Hastings³ Bank was on the corner, at No. 30 J Street (old numbering), from 1853-1871. Although the building is rundown, it still retains enough of its original appearance, with the structure essentially intact, to be easily identified with the pictures of the early 1850's.

The building was occupied to capacity for five years, 1853-1858. The south one-third was the headquarters for Wells, Fargo & Co's Express and Banking House, 1853- 1858 at No. 40 Second Street (now 1006). L. Herzog & Co., Clothier's, occupied No. 38 Second Street and Wormser & Co. Clothiers at No. 28 J Street.

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At the center of the building on Second Street, an outside stairway which is now removed, led up to the rooms of the State Supreme Court, where they were located from 1854-1857.⁴ State Attorney General McConnell and State Librarian H. R. Wood also had offices on the second floor, as did the judges and clerks of the Supreme Court, lawyers and other professional men.⁵

Officials of the newly organized Sacramento Valley Railroad Company had their headquarters upstairs during the year 1854-1855.⁶ Corville's Directory also lists Boyd & Davis, Architects, Real Estate Holders, Capitalists, and Brokers as tenants from 1855-1862.

After Wells, Fargo & Co. had moved from Hastings to the Birch Building, the Alta Telegraph Co. moved into the premises at No. 40 Second Street, now 1006 Second Street. There it was consolidated with the California State Telegraph Co. on July 13, 1860, both companies being pioneers of telegraphy in California.

"From this historic site at No. 40 Second Street, the Pony Express started its first overland journey eastward from Sacramento on April 5, 1860."⁷ The Hastings Building was the Pony Express Headquarters from April 3, 1860 to March 1861. The Alta Telegraph Co. was the first agency for the Pony Express from April to July 1860, and the California State Telegraph continued the agency from July 13, 1860, to March 1861, in the same quarters.

The last appearance of the Hastings & Co. in the directories was in 1871. The business closed because of bankruptcy proceedings, and the building has had various tenants since that time, but none as significant as during the prosperous growth of the 1850's.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

The history of the B. F. Hastings Bank Building, like its neighbor, the Adams & Co. Building, centers about the development of commerce, law, communication, and transportation in California, and the companies which the building housed:

1. B. F. Hastings Bank, 1853-1871
2. Wells Fargo & Co., 1853-1857
3. Alta California Telegraph Co., 1858
4. California State Telegraph Co., 1860-63
5. Pony Express, 1860
6. State Supreme Court, 1854-1857

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

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Exterior: The B. F. Hastings Bank Building is 85 feet long and 40 feet wide. The exterior walls are brick, plastered. There are two stories with a partial basement.

The facade has changed from its appearance in the 1850's, and retains little of its character of that time. The first floor has been replaced and is not considered significant. The entablature is no longer in existence as well as the cornice and earlier dentiles. The window openings on the second floor have not been seriously altered, and eight of them still contain the double hung sash with eight lights as well as the original sills. The exterior stair leading to the second floor from Second Street is no longer in existence.

Interior: The interior, although altered, still retains some of its original detail. The corridors lead into major rooms which are on the east side of the building. The rear stair is not considered original.

The second floor rooms have wood floors, plastered walls and plastered ceilings. The interior large office has a partial skylight. This office is divided from another office by a large wood and glass partition with folding doors.

The front corner room has the only fireplace in the building, but all other rooms have flue openings on the walls for portable stoves. The chimney flues were detailed into the exterior walls by simply omitting two brick courses in the wall construction.

The trim throughout is assumed to be redwood. The hardware has been replaced in the building. Lighting is a modern installation.

SITE:

The building faces J Street to the north and Second Street to the east. There is no longer any indication of the previous site organization.

REFERENCES:

- 1 Culver's Sacramento Directory; Jan. 1851, p. 19
"B. F. Hastings & Co., Bankers and Commission Merchants, No. 51 J Street, between 2d and 3d. Exchange for sale in the principal cities of the United States. Gold dust and coin purchased and sold."

- 2 "Merritt's brick building" was one of the several important structures put up in 1850. W. Merritt, owner of the building, was registered as a grocer at 36 Second St., which places his store exactly at the point where the stairway of the later B. F. Hastings Building led up to the Supreme Court Rooms in 1854.
- 3 B. F. Hastings was one of the organizers of the Odd Fellows Lodge in Sacramento. He called the first meeting to order on the evening of August 20, 1849, in the store of Urim, Baker, & McGee on Third Street between J and K Streets. Hastings came from Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Sacramento lodge was formed for the relief of sufferers in the epidemic of Sacramento in 1849.
- 4 Corville's Directory 1855, p. 89:- Judges of the Supreme Court met in the Court rooms in the Hastings Building in 1855. They were Chief Justice H. C. Murray and Attorney General J. R. McConnell.
- 5 Corville's Directory 1856, p. xxiv. Judges of the Supreme Court - Chief Justice, H. C. Murray; Associate Justices, Solomon Heydenfeldt, David S. Terry; Clerk of Supreme Court, Joseph R. Beard; Deputy Clerk, David T. Bagley.
- 6 Corville's Directory 1854-1855 p. 54 Judah, Theodore D., Chief Engineer Sacramento Valley Railroad, office Hastings Building, second floor.

IBID, p. 94 Wilson, Charles W., President Sacramento Valley Railroad Company, Hastings Building.
- 7 Hall, Carroll D. and Rensch, Hero. E.; Old Sacramento, Part II, Sacramento, California; Nov. 1958.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

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Hall, Carroll D. and Rensch, Hero E., Old Sacramento,
Sacramento, California, 1958.

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED:

Mr. Hero E. Rensch, Research Historian.

Prepared by,

Richard C. Peters

RICHARD C. PETERS
Architect

November 1960

Approved Charles S. Pope
Architect Historic Structures, W.O.D.C.